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ABSTRACT

The innovative newcomer program concept, developed as a model to meet the needs of the growing limited-English-proficient (LEP) population in American classrooms, is described. Newcomer programs function as temporary stopovers for recently arrived LEP immigrant and refugee students. They operate on the assumption that LEP newcomer students need a period of adjustment not only to the education system but also to the U.S. social environment. These students face such challenges as language limitations, less than age-appropriate education, lack of familiarity with the U.S. school system, and personal trauma and low self-esteem. Newcomer programs feature orientation to school and society, specialized curriculum, access to support services, individualized attention, specialized teacher training, and multicultural education. A variety of newcomer programs are in place in California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Newcomer identification and placement are described, along with program components and support services of the newcomer curriculum. Three models are discussed, including: all day, school within a school (Los Angeles); half day, separate site (Hayward, California); and all day, separate site (Long Island City, New York). Legal guidelines for newcomer programs are also provided, and sample curricula and a checklist for developing a newcomer program are appended. Contains 6 references. (LB)

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The Newcomer Program: Helping Immigrant Students Succeed in U.S. Schools

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Introduction: Newcomers and Our Schools

Over the past two decades America's classrooms have undergone an unmistakable metamorphosis. Anyone who has come in contact with the school system—whether as an educator, student, parent, policy maker, or service provider—cannot help but notice the rapid, profound, and continuous diversification of this country's student population in every sense of the word: racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and social. The trend is hardly new in this country but its accelerated pace and overall impact on our society and education system in many ways is.

The wave of immigration over the past two decades has had such a profound effect on our society that it can almost be regarded as the equivalent of a demographic revolution. And nowhere is that impact more obvious than in our schools.

During the 1980s alone an estimated nine million people from more than one hundred different countries made the United States their new home. Of these, approximately two million are school-aged. These figures match or exceed the historically high immigration rates from the beginning of this century. As a result, an estimated 5.7 percent of the students in kindergarten through twelfth grade nationwide are currently limited English proficient (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). In certain states, that proportion is far greater, with limited proficient speakers of English accounting for up to 18.1 percent of the school-age population in states such as New Mexico; in California it was 16.3 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Moreover, during the 1990s more than 5 million children of immigrants are expected to enter U.S. public schools. They will speak 150 different languages, and many are expected to have difficulties communicating in English. Limited proficiency in English presents a barrier to effective participation in school for most of these children.

Given the recent demographic changes that have altered the face of America's classrooms, school districts have an unprecedented responsibility during this decade to reach out to these youngsters and make them full and active members of our world. The fact that a serious need exists is not an issue anymore. Our job now lies in understanding the full dimensions of this challenge to our educational system and in devising effective means to address it.

To meet the limited English proficient (LEP) newcomer challenge, school districts in various parts of the country have developed a variety of methodologies and models, all of which have their strengths and weaknesses and are appropriate for certain groups of students or individual sets of circumstances. Over the past decade, however, school districts in a few states with large concentrations of LEP students have increasingly begun to experiment with several versions of an entirely innovative concept: the newcomer program.

In a nutshell, newcomer programs function as temporary stopovers—the equivalent of cultural and educational shock absorbers—for recently arrived LEP immigrant and refugee students. Whether they are self-contained programs or operate as part of regular schools, all newcomer programs act as separate entities that place students in a drastically different education climate from that offered by the regular school program.

Newcomer programs operate on the assumption that LEP newcomer students need a period of adjustment not only to the education system but also to the social environment of this country—a time during which they need an emotionally-safe educational atmosphere that fosters rapid language learning, acculturation, and enhancement of self-esteem.

Although developed as a response to the same general need, newcomer programs differ tremendously in terms of general structure and set-up, curriculum, length of stay, and language of instruction. Few are older than a decade, and some are continuously changing to meet the needs of their students. They are not the result of a structured national or state education policy; but rather, they are ad hoc responses to local education needs. What they do share is:

1. A dedication to helping limited English proficient newcomer students transition to the American school system as quickly and painlessly as possible.

2. An education approach that emphasizes English language acquisition while recognizing that development of language skills is but one of the many steps in the transition process.

The first step in LEP helping newcomer students, however, involves the determination of just who a "newcomer" is. Much confusion exists even now regarding use of the term. Clearly, the term involves more than a description of someone as being new to this country. More often than not, the term "newcomer student" refers to a combination of a student's level of language proficiency and/or academic skill, his or her length of stay in the United States, or even nationality.

As immigration trends changed, so has the usage of the term. Throughout the 1980s, immigrants and refugees came to the U.S. in great numbers from countries that had not been traditional sources of immigrants. Given their different backgrounds, these students posed very different challenges to educators in terms of their academic and emotional needs. Although no consensus exists on this subject even now, in recent years the term "newcomers" has been expanded to include any recently arrived immigrants and refugees who have limited proficiency in the English language. It is in this latter sense that the term "newcomer" will be used here.

Educators in all programs serving these young people are aware that, whatever their background, newcomer students are very willing and eager

to learn and succeed but do need an institutional cushion to prevent them from falling through the cracks.

Educational Challenge

Newcomer students in American schools invariably face a multitude of barriers in their attempt both to succeed academically and to adapt to American society. These two key features of the transitional process are closely interrelated, particularly since many of these young people arrive here at an age when social acceptance is a critical factor in any endeavor they may undertake.

For recently arrived newcomer students, in particular, the education difficulties before them tend to be particularly hard to overcome in regular school settings since many of them come from parts of the world where they received little, if any, formal education.

Following are a few of the most commonly-encountered obstacles faced by newcomers during their adjustment process. One needs to keep in mind, however, that each individual or group of newcomers brings along its own set of needs that should be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Limited English proficiency

A vast majority of newcomer students are classified as limited English proficient (LEP) based on their performance on standardized tests.

Less than age-appropriate education

Many of the newly-arrived immigrant students are virtually illiterate in their native language or have received less than age-appropriate education in their own countries. Many have never attended school, while others have only had limited schooling often disrupted by traumatic events in their lives. These youngsters need special attention to make up for lost time, to be able to function successfully in school, and eventually, to graduate from high school. Teachers in mainstream classes are often unprepared to assess and overcome the academic difficulties encountered by newcomers. Many educators believe that at least some of these children need specially designed intervention programs that train students in basic concepts and provide individual attention in all academic areas. This part of the transition process is particularly important for older students since their chance of successfully closing the education gap is directly proportional to their age.

Lack of familiarity with the American school system

Few experiences in the lives of most newcomer children or teenagers are as traumatic as that of being thrown in a school environment which, in its complexity, may be as alien to them as the English language itself. Many of them do not understand the grading system or social customs and do not

know when and where to go for classes or for lunch or how to use school facilities.

Thus a well-structured orientation program is critical to building a bridge between these students' past experiences and the new world in which they find themselves.

Personal trauma and low self-esteem

Many of the immigrant and refugee students in U.S. classrooms carry with them the unseen scars of personal traumas or hardships that most of their peers can hardly even envision.

Regardless of the conditions that brought them to this land, almost all newcomers have in some way been affected by the immigrant experience. At some time or another most of these young people have felt alienation, loneliness, or an undermining of their sense of self-confidence in the face of a strange new world. Encouragement and building their self-esteem can be key factors in their success in U.S. schools.

Newcomer Programs

General Description

In recognition of the multitude of educational and personal challenges faced by newcomer students during the past decade, school districts in many parts of the country have taken an innovative approach to intervention programs. Instead of trying to bring staff and services to each individual school site, they devised ways to centralize resources and bring together newcomer students and specialized education personnel at one location: the newcomer program.

Definition

Although they vary greatly in many respects, newcomer programs can be loosely defined as temporary transitional programs designed to meet the unique needs of newcomer students in the context of a nurturing and supportive educational environment. While emphasizing language acquisition in their curricula, newcomer programs operate on the premise that English language development by itself is not enough to ensure the successful adjustment and academic achievement of newcomer students. Unlike most English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, newcomer programs offer students a comprehensive array of academic and support services tailored to their special needs. These include: orientation to U.S. society and school system, a specially designed curriculum, a wide range of counseling services, parent and family support services, information and referral services, access to bilingual support personnel (e.g., nurses, psychologists, peer counselors), extracurricular activities, transportation, career orientation, and tutoring. Some programs also offer immunization and other health services.

Goals

Whatever their structures, all newcomer programs share these general goals:

- to provide students with a firm academic foundation;
- to develop English language proficiency;
- to give students orientation and basic survival skills;
- to develop their multicultural understanding and promote inter-cultural communication;
- to encourage secondary students to continue their education and increase their access to long term educational opportunities; and
- to enhance their self-esteem.

The primary instructional focus of newcomer programs is to teach students English while helping them acquire basic academic skills and concepts in the content areas that will allow them to transition to and perform successfully in a regular school.

Key features

Orientation to school and society. All students participate in special classes and extracurricular activities designed to familiarize them with the school, society, and their own communities.

A specialized curriculum that emphasizes rapid English language acquisition and academic content instruction.

Access to a wide range of support services such as counseling, tutoring, parent workshops, health services, interpreters, and others.

Individualized attention made possible through a low teacher/student ratio. The result is a more intimate setting and closer communication between staff and students, allowing for easier identification of problems and timely intervention.

Specialized teacher training. Staff development is an important feature of newcomer programs. Teachers participate in in-service activities on a regular basis to familiarize themselves with the most up-to-date research and effective instructional methodologies.

Multicultural education. Regardless of the language of instruction, all newcomer programs place a high premium on encouraging students to take pride in their native language and culture.

Additional benefits

Equitable access to resources. By locating staff and resources on key sites, districts can offer immigrant students throughout the district equitable access to a quality program delivered by trained bilingual teachers with expertise in the particular needs of newcomer students. A newcomer program is one way that a district can prevent the LEP student from being locked into an "LEP track" that often leads to limited career options. A

newcomer program offers a means for an initially limited English proficient student to acquire the necessary skills for achieving academic success in an English-speaking world as quickly as possible.

Supportive environment. Newcomer programs shelter newly-arrived students from the potentially hostile environment of a regular school. As teacher Myron Berkman from San Francisco's Newcomer High School once said, these programs are places where "all students are equal and no one can say, 'Hey, foreigner!' "

Family atmosphere. Because of the special circumstances that have brought these young people together and the difficulties they all share in adjusting to their new lives, newcomer centers take it upon themselves to create a special environment—almost a family atmosphere—which tends to be more conducive to quick assimilation and academic progress than a regular school program.

Continuity during adjustment period. Since newcomer programs serve large geographical areas, students are not forced to change schools when their families move during the first critical period in the country. As long as they continue to reside within school district boundaries, students can continue to attend the same newcomer program.

History and Geographical Distribution

In response to the rapid growth of the newcomer population within its borders, California became a pioneer during the 1970s and early 1980s in developing special programs for newcomer students. In recent years, however, the idea has taken hold in many school districts nationwide where newcomers constitute a significant proportion of the student population.

Unfortunately, no figures are available on the number of such programs in the country. There are two reasons for this. To begin with, the concept is still relatively new and many districts are setting up programs continuously, making it very difficult for anyone to keep track of their development. Secondly, since many schools with newcomer students have recently established some kind of program or separate language classes for immigrant and refugee students, it is very hard for anyone to easily distinguish the ones that qualify as "newcomer centers" for purposes of inclusion in this report. Many of these programs do not even refer to themselves as "newcomer programs" or "centers" and, as stated previously, much confusion exists about the use of the term "newcomer."

Some specialized programs, such as the Language Center at Rosemont Middle School in Fort Worth, Texas, have some of the features shared by "newcomer programs," but their emphasis is on the language development component as opposed to an overall program with support services and comprehensive curriculum.

According to a study conducted by the advocacy group California

Tomorrow (California Tomorrow, 1990), at least 17 districts in California have newcomer programs, of which 11 opened during the past five years. Other states with newcomer programs include Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, with specialized programs being continuously developed in other states as well.

Structural Differences

Newcomer programs were developed as a response to the local needs of individual school districts, not as a result of an integrated state or federal educational policy. Therefore, they lack a common bond and are very different from one another in terms of their general structure, educational approach, student makeup, grades served, language of instruction, entry and exit criteria, and curriculum. These differences reflect both divergent educational theories and the particular circumstances and needs that led to their establishment.

Some of the most important structural differences that define the various models of newcomer programs include:

- school-within-a-school versus self-contained, separate site;
- full-day versus half- or part-day programs; and
- single language versus multilingual programs.

The most controversial of these differences has to do with the physical location of the center. While most newcomer programs are operated on campuses of regular schools, some districts have set up programs in different locations, separating the newcomers from their counterparts in mainstream programs. The rationale behind this format choice is that, by consolidating staff and resources in one location, they can serve a large geographical area while maintaining the flexibility to serve the unique and changing needs of the newcomer population. In addition, proponents argue that such programs shelter students from an awkward, unwelcoming school atmosphere during the initial adjustment period.

Opponents argue that separate-site programs segregate students unnecessarily and deprive them of interaction with their English-speaking peers and of equal access to activities open to students in regular schools. In addition, they say, students have a harder time transitioning from these programs to a mainstream school than they do when changing classrooms on the same campus.

Student Makeup

Since immigrant settlement patterns differ from district to district, each newcomer program has a unique mix of students from various parts of the world. Some bring together students from as many as 30 or 40 different countries, while others are designed to serve a narrower cross-section of

newcomers from only a few geographical areas. In a few isolated cases, school districts are experimenting with monolingual newcomer programs. San Francisco, for example, has operated three individual elementary schools serving students from China and Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and Latin America, respectively. In general however, newcomer programs do not separate students by native language. Instead, they pride themselves with being "mini United Nations"—a place for children or teenagers who grew up in every corner of the globe to come together, learn with and from each other, and share experiences.

The mix of students in each program can change over time in response to demographic and settlement trends. For example, in Glendale, California, the proportion of Armenian students among the district's LEP population has gone up from 15-20 percent in 1988 to 80 percent only two years later (California Tomorrow, 1990).

Each school district formulates its own determination of what a newcomer student is for the purpose of admission into these programs. While admission requirements differ, they are all based on student evaluations at district intake centers.

Newcomer Identification and Placement

Assessment

A correct assessment of newcomer students' needs and of the program best suited to fill these needs is not only the first step, but possibly the most critical one, in newcomer students' educational experiences in this country. Within the first week of their enrollment in school, assessment centers operated by school districts take newly arrived students through a battery of comprehensive tests designed to determine how well prepared they are to survive academically in the U.S. classroom. Skills tested include:

- oral English language proficiency and comprehension;
- English reading and writing proficiency;
- native language proficiency (oral, reading, and writing); and
- mathematics/computation ability.

Parents are also interviewed regarding the previous education history of their children. Whenever possible, assessment centers request that school transcripts be submitted to facilitate the assessment process and ensure appropriate placement.

Most programs assess student skills by using one or more of the following standardized tests: oral and written Language Assessment Scales (LAS); IDEA test (for oral language proficiency); TEPL (written English); and various standardized math exams. When appropriate, students are sometimes asked to write essays in their native language to further ascertain their literacy level.

In addition to their basic assessment function, assessment centers

usually provide orientation to the school system, health examinations and immunizations, medical referrals, and parent information services.

Whenever possible, assessments are conducted in the students' native languages by staff trained to be sensitive to the backgrounds and special needs of these young people and their families. In addition, assessment centers attempt to maintain constant communication with school site personnel following placement to monitor student progress.

Placement

When placing students into a regular school, assessment centers find it very difficult to match their age with the grade level appropriate for them because of the tremendous range of educational backgrounds these students bring with them. The staff must take into consideration an unusual mix of factors which are often at odds with one another including as age, language proficiency, literacy in native language, years of schooling, and familiarity with school and society.

Because of their flexible nature, newcomer programs are better able to accommodate students with varying backgrounds during the initial adjustment period. In the long run, they also serve as an equalizer, giving students from all backgrounds the basic skills needed to function adequately at the grade level appropriate to their age after transfer to a regular program.

Since the number of spaces available in newcomer programs often cannot meet the demand, students selected for admission tend to be the ones with the least proficiency in English or who have very low levels of literacy or formal education in any language. Others are placed in the most appropriate programs at their home schools or at another recommended site.

Some programs accept only students classified as non-English proficient while others open their doors to those with limited English proficiency. Most place a limit on the maximum length of time students have spent in this country prior to enrollment. This may vary anywhere from six months to four years or more.

Transition to Other Programs

A newcomer program's exiting policy depends on a variety of factors such as the purpose and structure of the program, the degree of contact between newcomers and native speakers, overall integration, and availability of space in the program.

Most newcomer programs set a one-year limit on participation in order to minimize the period of isolation from a mainstream program. Students who have made good progress are usually allowed to transfer sooner, based on assessment by program staff. The assessment usually includes a

combination of testing and teacher appraisal. Some newcomer programs, such as the English Language Center in Hayward, California, allow students to stay as long as needed to achieve a desired level of achievement, provided that they spend only part of the day there and, therefore, are not deprived of contact with English-speaking students.

The ease of transition to other programs also depends on whether students leave a program for another site or remain within the same school. From this standpoint, programs set up as "schools within schools" have an edge in minimizing potential difficulties of transition. Teachers in the mainstream programs find it easier to communicate with students, with each other, and with the newcomer program staff. Separate site programs have to make special efforts after the transition to ensure communication with the new staff.

Newcomer Curriculum

Program Components

The central components of all newcomer curricula are English language development, academic content, and orientation classes.

The choice of curriculum is dependent on: (a) whether the program operates as a separate center or on a regular school campus; and (b) whether it is run on a full or part-time basis. The on-site and part-time programs emphasize mostly English language acquisition and the development of survival skills. Full-time and separate site programs are more comprehensive in order to ensure newcomers' access to the same curriculum as their native-born peers.

Since newcomer curricula are structured around students' previous education backgrounds and levels of language proficiency, they tend to be more flexible than regular school curricula. Some of them are split into separate tracks or strands for each level of language proficiency or academic preparedness. At the Newcomer Center at Crenshaw High School, Los Angeles, California, for example, instruction ranges from full bilingual classes for non-speakers of English to accelerated programs for LEP students who are at grade level.

In addition to using standardized textbooks, teachers in newcomer programs often modify existing curriculum materials or develop their own. This flexibility allows them to be responsive to student needs and to work student experiences into the curriculum. Materials and class discussions may thus include student accounts of their immigration experience or other related topics appropriate to a particular group of students.

English language development

A major component of newcomer program curricula, ESL instruction starts out with development of oral comprehension and proceeds to development of English reading and writing skills. Emphasis is placed on communicative competence. Students usually progress through a hierar-

chy of ESL levels during their stay in the program, and are usually exited upon completion of the highest level.

Content areas

Newcomer programs should provide students the same access to a regular academic curriculum as mainstream programs. With that goal in mind, they offer courses in many of the following areas: social science (including history and geography), mathematics, basic science, and literature. Depending on the individual school, a wider range of classes may be available.

No consensus exists on what the primary language of instruction for subject areas should be. This choice depends on both the education philosophy on which the program is based and the availability of bilingual personnel for each language. Most programs use a mix of native and English language instruction. A few programs, such as the International High School in New York City, prefer to rely entirely on English language instruction, because they are founded on the theory that an integrated approach enhances both language and content learning and encourages communication among speakers of all languages.

The Sheltered English approach uses English for content instruction while including native language instruction to develop background knowledge and literacy (Krashen, 1991). Spanish-speaking newcomers tend to receive the most native language instruction, an option usually not available to children who speak less common languages.

Orientation

Orientation classes are used to introduce newcomer students to the school, the education system, and the community, and to orient them to U.S. culture and society. Field trips to the community are sometimes integral parts of the orientation process. Basic components include tours of school facilities and activities for students to get acquainted with each other and school staff. Each program develops its own strategies to introduce newcomer students to their environment. The International High School, for example, uses student interviews as a means for students to learn about each other and their teachers in addition to enhancing their conversational and social skills. Through a variety of "get acquainted activities" students progress through increasingly complex conversational stages which culminate in class presentations and a final report.

Use of non-traditional methodologies

Many newcomer programs rely increasingly on innovative student-centered teaching methodologies that are gaining popularity in mainstream schools. These include whole language instruction, integration of language and content instruction, a literature-based approach to literacy, the use of music and imagery, cooperative learning (where it is culturally appropri-

ate), and other non-traditional teaching strategies. Their successful employment is facilitated by the intimate family-type atmosphere prevalent at newcomer centers.

Cooperative learning, for example, facilitates instruction in classes where students have different levels of language and academic ability. Classes are divided into groups and students are encouraged to express their feelings on a variety of topics and in a variety of ways. Students are encouraged to depend on each other for their learning in a positive way (see Cochran, 1989). While different programs place different emphases on this methodology, practically all employ it in some form or another. Cooperative learning may not be appropriate for certain students in light of culture-specific considerations. For such students, cooperative learning activities may result in increased stress.

An integrated, whole language, thematic approach to language and content learning is emphasized in a number of programs to expand on regular language arts and ESL instruction. The curriculum at Newcomer Center School in Sacramento, California, is built entirely around the notion that children learn best the "natural way" through experience and experimentation. The whole language approach is used as a means for learning language by encountering it in a natural context. Information from all areas of the curriculum are introduced as part of a whole instead of being broken down as individual elements. The Newcomer Center also relies on a literature-based thematic approach with emphasis on reading aloud, in which all classes follow a one-year plan built around one topic, such as "People Around the World."

LEP newcomer students often are not able to participate fully in content class (e.g., social studies). One way to allow the English learner to develop academic skills and content knowledge is by means of integrated language and content instruction (see Crandall, 1987).

While no systematic evaluation has been done to test the effectiveness of each approach, the experimentation with new methodologies built into many of these programs points to the fact that traditional methodologies have often not proven effective for newcomer students. Moreover, it demonstrates the commitment on the part of newcomer center educators to the success of their pupils, and their willingness to seek out whatever means are available to help accomplish their goal.

Support Services

Counseling

School counselors in newcomer programs are sensitized to the backgrounds of particular student populations and are thus able to address their needs. Most offer access to a school psychologist as well as various other specialized services. For example, the Newcomer Center at Los Angeles'

Crenshaw High School offers counseling for students in temporary shelters, women's support groups, and services for pregnant girls.

Health services

Many immigrant and refugee students suffer from a host of physical and emotional problems that need immediate attention. Most programs offer students access to at least a part-time nurse and on-site immunization. Substance abuse and pregnancy services may also be available. In addition, the programs offer referral services to connect students and their families with outside medical services.

Parent outreach

Communication with newcomer students' families is a key concern of all newcomer programs. Staff members go to great lengths to provide opportunities for parents to attend meetings or parent/teacher conferences, whenever possible in their native language. Most communicate with parents through notices and special announcements and some have newsletters in various languages. In certain cases, bilingual aides call or visit parents as well.

Liaison with community services

Recently-arrived immigrant families often have little awareness of the public benefits or community services to which they are entitled. These may include financial assistance, food stamps, and medical services, among others. Newcomer programs often take it upon themselves to act as referral agencies connecting students and parents to available services and agencies.

Special programs & extracurricular activities

Newcomer programs develop their own activities to promote students' understanding of, and adjustment to their new environment. These include field trips, special inter-school activities, and cultural programs. Newcomer High School in San Francisco offers an Interdistrict Cultural Exchange program, which brings together students from Newcomer High with mainstream students from other schools in the district. Students attend common cultural programs in addition to spending time in each others' schools and communities.

Career education

Programs that serve high-school-aged students put a high premium on preparing them for life after graduation. Most programs offer career orientation and counseling. A few offer more extensive activities and specialized classes. The International High School in New York, for example, requires students to enroll in three career development courses in addition to completing three out-of-school internships.

Newcomer Program Models: Three Schools

All Day, School within a School

Newcomer Center at Crenshaw High School
Los Angeles, California

Grades: 9–11

Major languages served: Cantonese, Korean, Spanish

Language of instruction: Primary language in content classes and English

Founded in 1989, this newcomer program is located on the second floor of Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles. Its central location on campus was intended to make students feel they are physically integrated within the school in the hope of enhancing their self-esteem and positive attitude.

By being part of a regular school site, the Newcomer Center guarantees students equal access to educational opportunities by allowing them to participate in all programs available to other students, such as competitive sports, ROTC, and art classes. At the same time, the newcomer curriculum is designed to help young immigrant and refugee students adjust to their new language and school environment by offering them a wide range of specialized classes and orientation services that meet their particular needs.

The program enrolls 450 students from 19 countries, of whom up to 90 percent are Spanish-speaking, with the others speaking Cantonese and Korean. Only non-speakers of English are offered admission at the Newcomer Center. Students are enrolled for a period of up to one year, following which they are transferred into the regular high school program. Summer school is mandatory.

The center's curriculum takes into account the fact that LEP newcomer students often lack not just language or even literacy skills, but basic concepts that most American teachers take for granted. The program is therefore structured in four units that cover basic concepts and subject areas: health education (including hygiene and sex education), basic science experiments, social science (history/geography), and literature.

Following their assessment on a series of diagnostic tests, students are placed in one of the following strands, developed as part of the Los Angeles School District master plan:

Strand I: *full bilingual*, for students who are not literate in their native language;

Strand II: *modified bilingual*, for students who read at a fourth through eighth grade level in their primary language;

Strand III: *accelerated bilingual*, for students performing at grade level in their native language; or

Strand IV: *English language development*, for students who cannot be served in their primary language due to a lack of teachers.

The centerpiece of the program is its intensive bilingual instruction. Since the Newcomer Center only accepts non-English speakers, students start out by spending most of the day in primary language instruction. As English proficiency and native language literacy improve, the balance gradually shifts away from language arts in the primary language towards increased emphasis on accelerated ESL instruction.

The curriculum emphasizes content area instruction using cooperative and group learning techniques and thematic lessons. Newcomer orientation is a comprehensive course of study taught in the primary language.

Since many of the LEP newcomer students have undergone traumatic events prior to their enrollment at Crenshaw, counseling and support services are a major component of the program. A school psychologist works with groups of students on a regular basis, encouraging them to express their thoughts and feelings toward the immigrant experience. Other support services include counseling for students in temporary shelters, after-school tutoring, women's groups, health services, parent education workshops, and leadership classes. The school also works closely with outside agencies and offers a wide range of extracurricular activities.

Half Day, Separate Site

English Language Center
Hayward, California

Grades: 7–11

Major languages served: Chinese, Dari, Spanish, Vietnamese

Language of instruction: English as a Second Language, with History in Spanish and Farsi/Dari Language Arts.

The English Language Center in Hayward, California, is designed to complement the regular school curriculum in a half-day transitional program that gradually prepares students to function successfully in their neighborhood schools. Students are bused to the ELC from five intermediate schools, three high schools, and one continuation school. In 1990 the Center enrolled 412 students who came from 29 countries and spoke 19 different languages.

Now entering its second decade of operation, the English Language Center (ELC) serves a school district with a student population of which 20 percent have limited command of the English language. First conceived as a temporary measure in 1981, the Center was intended to provide intensive English language instruction while redirecting new-

comer students away from schools not fully prepared to meet their needs. A decade later, the school serves approximately 25 percent of the district's LEP population. Zaida McCall, ELC's principal and innovator, considers the Center to be the equivalent of an extension campus of each secondary school in the district.

The emphasis on *gradual* transition is a key feature of this program. Students take their time and leave the program whenever the school decides they are fully prepared to transition to a regular school—students may spend up to eight semesters enrolled at ELC.

Based on initial assessment tests, administered right at the ELC, LEP students are placed at their appropriate level of instruction, and are eligible to spend from one to eight semesters at the school, depending on their progress. The ELC can afford to offer this open-ended exiting policy because the half-day program allows students ample opportunities to have regular school experiences with their U.S. peers during the rest of the day.

A key feature of the program is that the staff connects students and parents with advocates and liaisons who stay in touch with them even after the students have exited from the program. Throughout a student's stay at the Center, administrative and support staff take responsibility for constant communication with outside schools and for ensuring that students receive adequate services throughout their entire schooling experience.

The Center also maintains close ties with mainstream schools by offering their teachers the opportunity to develop skills in teaching LEP newcomer students by viewing ELC's techniques and atmosphere first hand.

ELC prides itself on the fact that all of its teachers either are all immigrants, or have at least lived and worked extensively in another country. This experience of once having been a "stranger in a strange land" helps them relate to the difficulties encountered by their pupils in ways few of their American-born counterparts could. All teachers are proficient in English and each holds a degree and has had advanced graduate training in teaching English as a Second Language.

The program consists of three daily periods of instruction that include four levels of ESL, World History, U.S. History, and Cultural Orientation. Primary language instruction is offered to Spanish speakers in World History and U.S. History classes, and to Dari and Farsi speakers in Language Arts. Primary language academic tutorial or small group support is offered to speakers of other languages on a pull-out basis.

The curriculum emphasizes the natural approach to English language acquisition, which takes students through the stages of listening and developing comprehension to speaking and, only later, to reading and writing. The program also uses an integrated whole language approach with emphasis on communicative competence.

ESL courses cover four levels of instruction — from conversation and oral grammar for students with little or no English language skills (level A), to reading and writing courses at level D. Upon exiting the program students are expected to speak English fluently. Recommendation for exiting the program is made by the teachers, with the final decision based on testing and assessment by the ELC exit committee. Testing consists of the oral, reading and writing Language Assessment Scales (LAS), the Gates-McGinite test (measuring vocabulary and reading comprehension), and a district mastery test in ESL, reading, and writing.

The ELC staff emphasize the preservation of students' native languages and cultures by incorporating them into the program as much as possible. Principal Zaida McCall is especially cognizant of the fact that acculturation into mainstream U.S. society should not occur at the expense of the erosion of students' native language. To that end, the staff encourage, rather than deter, the use of native languages at the school site.

All Day, Separate Site

International High School at LaGuardia Community College
Long Island City, New York

Program structure: separate-site, full-time

Grade levels: 9–12

Number of students: 400

Major languages served: Cantonese, Korean, Polish, Romanian, Spanish

Language of instruction: English

Founded in 1985 on the campus of the La Guardia Community College (LGCC), the International High School (IHS) in New York City takes the concept of the newcomer program a step further than the previously described models. Rather than providing a transition to a regular school, IHS is the final high school destination for newcomers who enroll in it. In addition, all graduating students are guaranteed admission to the community college.

Unlike other newcomer programs, this school offers a comprehensive high school as well as college curricula and includes specially designed high school courses taught by college professors. Students also have the option of taking classes at the community college, and have full use of the college's facilities, including the gymnasium, libraries, recreational areas, and cafeteria. Through this permanent contact with the LGCC, high school newcomer students not only have access to enhanced educational opportunities, but can also interact on a regular basis with native English speakers.

Another major difference between this model and most others lies with its choice of language of instruction. While most newcomer programs rely

on the use of primary language for content area instruction, IHS uses English as the only language of instruction for both English language development and the acquisition of content across the curriculum.

The main principles guiding this school's strategy are that (1) language skills are most effectively learned in a meaningful context and are embedded in content areas; and (2) students learn best from each other and, therefore, should not be separated into homogeneous language groups.

IHS takes pride in its unusually high graduation and attendance rates. During the school's first three years average daily attendance rates exceeded 90 percent, and the average dropout rate was a low 3.9 percent, as compared with New York's citywide figure of nearly 30 percent. Ninety percent of the seniors received their diplomas during the school's first graduation ceremony in 1988. These success rates won IHS nationwide recognition, including the gold medal awarded by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.

Admission to IHS is open to New York City residents who have lived in this country for fewer than four years and are limited English proficient, as determined by test scores (Language Assessment Battery).

The four-year, fully-developed curriculum meets state guidelines and requirements for graduation and consists of: English grammar, composition, and literature (12 courses); social science (11); career education (4); science (8); mathematics (6); foreign language (4); art (3); music (4); and physical education (5). For more information on the curriculum, see Appendix A.

Extensive career orientation and mandatory internships are the centerpieces of the IHS program, allowing students to investigate career options beyond graduation. IHS has an extensive internship program. Additional support services include counseling, a guidance support team, academic advising, and small-group tutorials.

Legal Guidelines for Newcomer Programs

Although neither federal laws nor court decisions dictate any specific approaches to educating language minority students, see Lau v. Nichols, *414 U.S. 563, 94 S.Ct. 786 (1974), districts are not free of legal requirements when designing special programs for newcomer students. For legal guidelines pertaining to the implementation of newcomer programs, refer to the box at left.*

Newcomer programs are subject to scrutiny under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. However, in the one case that has been investigated and decided by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), a Newcomer School was found to be in compliance with Title VI.

In a memorandum of December 4, 1990, the OCR headquarters office advised its regional office that the decision of compliance with Title VI was based on a number of factors. These were:

- The District is not operating under a court or administrative order to desegregate its schools.
- Enrollment in the Newcomer School is voluntary. The District informs parents that they may enroll their children in either their home schools or the Newcomer School. The immigrant students' home schools offer the language services necessary to allow them to benefit from the schools' programs.
- The Newcomer School is multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-linguistic. Students in the school are from a variety of different countries and speak a variety of different languages.
- Attendance at the Newcomer School is limited to no more than one year. Some Newcomer students return to their home schools in less than a year.
- Students are eligible for the Newcomer School based on both their need for language services and for assistance in adjusting to American culture.
- The facilities and the range of courses and extracurricular activities at the Newcomer School are comparable to those at the District's other schools.

(Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 1991)

Conclusion

According to federal law, school districts have an obligation to take the necessary legal steps needed to offer young immigrant and refugee students the same education opportunities that are available to their native-born peers. However, since the law does not dictate the specific steps to be taken, school districts, guided by local needs and demographic realities, have experimented with a wide range of programs and educational methodologies. As a result, no two programs are identical, and educators rely on a variety of competing educational philosophies while pursuing the same general goals.

While no one system or methodology has yet proven itself to be more effective than the rest, the concept of newcomer programs has slowly gained popularity as a possible first step in helping newcomer students function in school. Further study is needed to determine the long-term effectiveness of these programs. Nevertheless, newcomer programs have addressed a number of key problems encountered by regular schools:

1. Most school districts lack the staff, resources, and expertise needed to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diversified LEP immigrant student population.

2. Many newcomer students not only lack English language skills, but may also be illiterate in their native language and lacking in basic academic concepts needed to function successfully in school.

3. Because of the complex background and education history of newcomer students, school districts find it difficult to place them in a grade and program appropriate not just to their age but also to their individual educational needs.

4. Many LEP newcomer students have needs that transcend academic concerns. Many of them have suffered through difficulties or even personal traumas that need to be addressed simultaneously with their academic instruction.

Newcomer programs seek to address these concerns by centralizing resources and providing students not just with intensive language instruction, but also with a safe educational environment in which to acquire basic academic and survival skills. As a result, all newcomer programs share the following features:

- They offer extensive orientation to school, community, and society;
- They emphasize intensive English language development;
- They hire bilingual staff specifically trained to meet the needs of newcomer students and in the methodologies effective with them;
- They offer a flexible, multicultural curriculum which responds to student needs and allows students to move through the program at an individual pace;
- They provide students a multitude of support services such as counseling, tutoring, career education, and health services;
- They place a high premium on parent outreach and involvement.

These features notwithstanding, no consensus exists among experts in the field on what constitutes the ideal structure or ideal language of instruction for such a program. Some programs offer comprehensive curricula in separate, full-time centers, while others prefer to operate as part of regular campuses or even on a part-time basis. Some use students' native languages as the primary languages of instruction, while others rely on English as a Second Language as a vehicle for content learning. Some function as a very short-term, temporary stop-over, exiting students after only a few months, while others prefer to keep newcomer students in a more sheltered environment for a year or more.

School districts must keep in mind that programs must also be designed with consideration to legal requirements, which can place programs in conflict with federal desegregation laws. In particular, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights warns against undue segregation of students in separate-site programs, favoring instead programs that keep students on the regular school campus and for the shortest period of time possible. Separate-site centers and programs that enroll students for extended periods of time are required to demonstrate strong educational justification for their approach. Regardless of their structure, they must all offer students access to the same services and curricula as regular programs.

Nevertheless, much legal ambiguity still exists with respect to these guidelines. As newcomer programs spread and gain popularity, the need for stronger guidelines will be necessary, particularly with respect to what constitutes unavoidable segregation of students.

Whatever structure or methodology is chosen, many newcomer programs appear to have achieved a good measure of success, largely due to the extraordinary dedication and creativity of the staff. Teachers, administrators, and support staff—many of whom are immigrants themselves—are especially sensitive to the needs of students and are determined to continuously seek new ways to help them succeed. However, more extensive evaluation of these programs is required before educators can accept them as effective.

Finally, these programs are based on the premise that learning does not need to be forced on newcomer students. To the contrary, immigrant students come to America eager and highly motivated to learn and to adapt to a new home and environment. Unfortunately, along the way they encounter language, social, and academic obstacles that they cannot always overcome by themselves. What they need is a school environment conducive to their adjustment and an institutional nudge to help them over the initial hump.

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Appendix A

Sample Curricula

Newcomer Center at Crenshaw High School, Los Angeles, California

Strand I	Strand II	Strand III	Strand IV
English Language Development	**Full Bilingual**	**Modified Bilingual**	**Accelerated Bilingual**
Introduction to Reading	Language Arts in Primary Language	Language Arts in Primary Language	Introduction to Reading and Intermediate Reading
English Language Development	Language Arts in Primary Language	English Language Development (ESL)	English Language Development (ESL)
English Language Development (ESL)	English Language Development (ESL)	English Language Development (ESL)	English Language Development (ESL)
Orientation and Guidance/Fine Arts (Sheltered English)	Orientation and Guidance/ Introduction to U.S. Heritage (Primary Language)	Orientation and Guidance/ Introduction to U.S. Heritage (Primary Language)	Orientation and Guidance/ Introduction to U.S. Heritage or Fine Arts (Primary Language)
Math (Sheltered English)	Math (Primary Language)	Math (Intro to Math or Regular Math)	Math (Primary Language)
PE (Sheltered English)	PE (Sheltered English)	PE (Sheltered English)	PE (Sheltered English)

Newcomer High School, San Francisco, California

I. Language Development & Language Lab

Oral Language Strand	Writing Strand	Life Skills Strand
A. Listening Comprehension	A. Fluency	A. Survival Information and Skills
B. Oral Production	B. Composition	B. Career/Vocational Information and Skills
C. Conversation Skills	C. Sentence-Level Writing and Editing	C. Cultural Comparisons/ Orientation to U.S. Culture and Society

II. Reading Class

Reading Strand	Study Skills Strand
A. Composition/Interpretation/ Literature	A. Taking Notes from Oral and Written Information
B. Single Word Level Skills	B. Research Skills

International High School at LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, New York: Comprehensive High School Curriculum for LEP Students

ESL is used as the only language of instruction. An Integrated Language Center (ILC) stands at the core of the learning activities. All classes are taught with emphasis on acquisition and practice of English language skills. Students also complete three out-of-school internship programs.

Required Classes

English	Introduction to Literature American Literature World Literature	
Integrated Language Center (ILC)	Orientation to School and Society 1 Orientation to School and Society 2 Research on Career Opportunities	
Social Studies	Global Studies 1 Global Studies 2 Global Studies 3 Global Studies 4	American Studies 1 American Studies 2 Economics 1 Participation in Government
Career Education	Personal and Career Development 1	Internship Seminar 1
	Personal and Career Development 2	Internship Seminar 2
	Decision Making	Internship Seminar 3
Science	Human Development	

An additional two courses in English/ILC, science, or mathematics are required for graduation.

Electives

English:	"Quest," Short Story, Teenage Literature, Modern American Literature, Drama, Poetry, Yearbook, Theater Arts
ILC:	Communication Across Cultures, Cross-Cultural Studies, Structural English, College Prep, Advanced Language Skills
Social Studies:	Student Government (3 classes)
Science:	Physics (2 classes), Computer Science, Human Anatomy, Biology, Zoology, Chemistry
Math:	5 sequential classes
Foreign language:	French, Spanish (2 classes each)
Art:	Art in New York, Painting, Portfolio Development
Music:	Piano, Guitar (2 classes), New Music
Physical Education:	Weight Training, Rope Climbing, Soccer/Basketball/ Volleyball
Guidance:	Group Dynamics

Appendix B

Considerations in Developing a Newcomer Program: A Checklist

Planning

- ❒ How do you choose to define "newcomer"?
- ❒ Does the written rationale for the program include:
  - description of current unmet needs?
  - description of how the district (school) meets the needs of all LEP students?
  - description of the specific goals of the newcomer program?
- ❒ What will the structure of the program look like?
  - place—separate site or school-within-a-school?
  - time—part-day or all-day?
- ❒ What are the entrance and exit criteria? Prioritize by need.
- ❒ How long will students remain in the program?
- ❒ Will transportation need to be provided?
- ❒ How will the program be funded?
  - permanent versus temporary funding sources
  - funding for staff, staff development, space, equipment, materials, etc.
- ❒ How will the program be administered?
- ❒ What will the impact be on the school, district, and community?
  - increased awareness and understanding across languages and cultures
  - sensitivity to issues of racial/ethnic/cultural conflict
  - integration
- ❒ Is there a plan to visit a newcomer program to see an example in action?

Legal requirements

- ❒ Is there a need for the district (school) to provide an alternative program designed to meet the needs of newcomer/LEP students?
  - What are the entrance and exit criteria?
  - What are the priorities for selection of students?
  - What is the maximum length of time a student will be in the program?
- ❒ Is the alternative program likely to be effective?
  - Is it based on a sound design?
  - Do students have access to extracurricular activities?
  - Is there appropriate staff?
  - Are there adequate resources?
  - Is there an evaluation process to monitor student progress?
  - Is there a process for parental consent and continuous communication?
  - How will student needs be met after exit from the program?

Intake

- ❒ Has a standardized process been developed for assessment and placement of LEP students?
- ❒ Does student assessment include oral proficiency and literacy in the primary language(s) and English?
- ❒ How is a student's academic background assessed (e.g., informal assessment, formal tests, transcripts)?
- ❒ How do you identify special needs—academic, social, health, legal?
- ❒ is there parental approval?
- ❒ How are students placed if they arrive in the middle of the year ?

Staff, Curriculum, and Instruction

- ❒ How will staffing needs be met?
  - teachers, bilingual instructional assistants, family/community liaisons, support staff
  - qualifications such as credentials, training language, teaching experience, cultural experiences
  - process of staff selection
  - definition of staff roles
  - ongoing staff development
- ❒ How will the program meet student needs in these curriculum areas?
  - language and literacy development
  - core academic areas
  - orientation to U.S. schooling, culture, and society
- ❒ Will the content of the courses be based on program requirements or regular district requirements?
- ❒ What steps will be taken to ensure that the curriculum is student-centered, valuing all cultures, languages, and life experiences?
- ❒ What instructional approaches will be used (e.g., primary language, bilingual, sheltered)?
- ❒ How will students be grouped for instruction (e.g., grade level, date of entry, primary language, English proficiency, academic ability)?
- ❒ What curriculum materials will be available?
- ❒ How will curriculum be selected/developed?
- ❒ What physical resources will be available (i.e., space, equipment, supplies)?
- ❒ How will the needs of students with little or no prior schooling (preliterate) be met?

- ❒ What services will be available for students with other special needs (e.g., learning disabilities, family problems, health problems, legal problems, war trauma)?
- ❒ What support services will be available (e.g., counseling, tutoring, health/social services)?
- ❒ What interaction will students have with native English speakers as language models?
- ❒ Will students have access to nonacademic electives and extracurricular activities?
- ❒ How will students' affective needs be addressed?
  - attitudes, expectations, behavior regarding school
  - emotional, cultural, and social impact of life in a new country
- ❒ How will students receive credit for coursework?
- ❒ Mainstreaming:
  - How will LEP students be prepared for mainstreaming?
  - How does the district (school) prepare mainstream teachers and students for newcomer/LEP students?
- ❒ How does the program communicate with parents?
- ❒ How do parents communicate with the program?
- ❒ How can parents participate effectively in the program?
- ❒ How are newcomer family needs met by the program?

Evaluation

- ❒ How will student progress be measured?
  - language and literacy
  - academic subjects
  - orientation to U.S. culture and society
  - affective needs
- ❒ How will individual student progress be tracked after exit from the program?
- ❒ How will program effectiveness be measured?
- ❒ How will the impact of the program on the school and community be evaluated?

About the Author

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